



FIA Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Today's big story

State employees come together like family for one in need

By Mary Tubergen and Mary Schoen
Kent County FIA, Grand Rapids
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Lori Hernandez, a case reader at **Kent County FIA**, was devastated when their home burned to the ground on the evening of June 16.

Fortunately, Lori and her family were not at home when it happened. Lori and her husband, Gerald, along with 10-year old son Jacob and one-year old daughter Laura, were at a cookout at their parents' home.



There wasn't much left of the Hernandez home after fire burned through it June 16.

A neighbor called to tell them that their house was on fire (at least they were warned and did not have to come home to unexpected devastation). Lori is also expecting her third child this fall.

Kent County staff, who were already involved in a casual day event, began taking a separate collection for Lori's family the next morning. Within 20 minutes of notice being sent out to staff, hundreds of dollars were collected and an emergency shopping trip was made by some of Lori's coworkers to replenish the most necessary items needed by this family.

One worker, who also volunteers at one of the local food pantries, had food delivered immediately to Lori and her family. The official Casual Day for Lori was held June 25.

Our neighbors, **Allegan County FIA**, also joined the cause by sponsoring a Casual Day at their office. To date, monetary donations have totaled \$2,206 in addition to donations of clothing, baby accessories, linens, household items, toys and games.

Lori and her family have been overwhelmed by the generosity of all her fellow state employees. Kent County has sponsored many casual days for individuals in the community as well as our own customers who have endured hardship and tragedy.

They have proven that they will do no less for one of their own Kent FIA extended family members.

L-letter source

Last issue the source of the term "L-letter" was left unresolved. Since that time, a number of readers suggested it was named after the late **Robert Little**, a former FIA manager. However, a response from another former FIA employee indicates it was named after **Fred Lawless**.



"This is the reply that I got from Fred Lawless," said former FIA county director **Chuck Higgins**. "This should settle the debate."

Hi Chuck,

*They still tell me there are **L-letters** – which were started when I was deputy to Jack Dempsey. A big thing was being made about "line" and "staff" in the organization. Line was supposed to own nearly everything and since I was the deputy for field operations I co-signed all directives to the field along with Jack. So they were called "L" letters for the first initial in my last name. At least that is the way I remember it. Why they kept on calling them L letters I do not know.*

Fred Lawless

CEH

■ John "Jack" Dempsey was director of Michigan Department of Social Services from 1975-82.

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Customer letters praising employees are very popular with other employees. To submit a customer letter for publication: Ensure your supervisor knows about this and approves; have the customer sign **Consent for Publication** form which is downloadable from the MS Word template as form **0199.dot**; and send the letter and a copy of the signed consent form to me by e-mail or by fax (517-373-8471). Please include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of the employee(s) cited in the letter. Thanks!

Larry VanDeSande

VanDeSandeL@michigan.gov

Baker College Academy success stories

From Eva Pyles

Genesee County FIA, Flint

PylesE@michigan.gov

In a county that has seen systematic factory closures, job skills are a necessity to earning a living wage. It was that knowledge that led Flint-based Baker College, Career Alliance – our local Michigan Works! Agency – and FIA to develop a strategy to help our customers leave the revolving welfare door they so often face.

The first Baker College Academy program, BCA 1, began in June 2001. Seventy-three students were enrolled in either a Patient Care Technician or Medical Insurance Billing certification program. Baker provided financial aid program assistance and reduced tuition costs. Career Alliance assisted eligible customers with pre-employment training and covered fees not paid by financial aid. FIA covered tuition costs and supportive services for any non-Work First students. Three FIA workers rotated a day a week onsite at the college to help remove barriers such as day care, domestic violence, utility shutoffs and to monitor attendance and grades.

Eleven BCA 1 students graduated and had their FIP cases closed. Ten others completed their externships, became employed and left welfare. Several of the students went on to continue their education. Another graduated from Baker's registered nursing program in June.

There have been four Baker College Academies, each with the same quiet, unassuming successes.

- One of our clients is currently employed at health care center Genesys as a certified nursing assistant. Her welfare case is closed.
- Another has gone on to work at Select Specialty Hospital making \$1,578 a month.
- Another academy graduate works at Genesee County jail in the medical department and is making \$1,800 a month.
- Another left the auto mechanics program after three semesters and used knowledge he gained to become employed at Jiffy Lube earning over \$1,341 a month.

Genesee County is glad that the State of Michigan is following our lead and piloting the Parents as Scholars program. Welfare recipients need an opportunity to get off welfare and earn a living. Genesee County has proven that Welfare to Work starts with education.

New QuickKnowledge Course – “Mentoring”

Contact Janet Waterstradt

Waterstradtj@michigan.gov

“Mentoring” is a new Web-based course that will show you how to develop mentoring relationships. In an increasingly complex and high-tech environment, mentors provide special insight, understanding, and information from outside the normal channels. Mentors can help others manage organizational, technological, and personal change effectively. Each of us can fill the role of a mentor in the lives of others. Mentoring is a challenge, but as you follow the guidelines in this course, you will meet that challenge and develop mentoring relationships that will be rewarding for you and those you mentor.

The course takes about one hour to complete, and it is available to all FIA employees. You can access it at any time in the Office of Professional Development's learning resources database at: <http://www.quickknowledge.com/qk/alliance/TipInteractive/popups/Courses/Preview.asp?courseid=195> Click on “more info” next to the course name. You can also search the database for other Web-based courses. Go to <http://performance-architect.mfia.state.mi.us/resourceTools/SearchResources.asp>. Then, in the drop-down boxes, select “Web based training” and the category of resource that you are interested in, and click on “Search.”

Saginaw County employee honored with local award

The CAN Council honored **Rhoda Dietrich** with the “CAN-DO Award” at the annual volunteer appreciation luncheon in May. Rhoda has volunteered with the CAN Council for approximately five years.



She serves on the Children's Assessment Center (CAC) Steering Committee and the Law Enforcement Flipchart

Rhoda Dietrich

Committee. She participated in the 2004 Strategic Planning Meeting and volunteers for the auction and the CAC Football Fundraiser, and was a co-presenter of the For Kids Sake: Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse presentation.

Rhoda is an adult and children's protective services supervisor for the Saginaw County Family Independence Agency.

“I strongly believe in the volunteer efforts that many staff already exercise on a regular basis,” Dietrich said. “If every one of us routinely volunteered, all walks of society would be greatly enhanced. I encourage everyone to begin today and be a volunteer.”

The CAN Council and the community have both benefited from Rhonda's professionalism, extensive knowledge, honesty, and vision that the system can be better. She has the ability to state complicated policies into real life concepts. Rhoda is very down to earth and passionate about protecting the children of Saginaw County.

■ Reprinted with permission from July 2004 CAN Council Newsletter published by the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Saginaw County

2004 FIA Golf Challenge finalized

From Denise Binger
Mackinac County FIA,
BingerD@michigan.gov

Plans for the 2004 Michigan FIA Golf Challenge have now been finalized. The golf tournament, a four person best ball scramble event, is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 17, 2004 and will commence with a 9:00 A.M. shotgun start.

The Cheboygan Golf and Country Club – located at 1431 Old Mackinaw Road, Cheboygan (telephone 231-627-4264) – is pleased to be the host golf course for this year's tournament. Thursday, Sept. 16 has been set aside for a practice round for those golfers interested in obtaining the course layout at a cost of \$20, including golf cart. The golf tournament entry fee is \$160 per team (\$40 per golfer) and includes golf with cart, luncheon and prizes. As in previous years, trophies will be awarded to the first and last place teams.

The Continental Inn, located at 613 N Main Street in downtown Cheboygan, has been selected as tournament headquarters. Overnight lodging accommodations are available to those golfers staying Thursday and/or Friday nights at a cost of \$39 single and \$49 double per night in conjunction with the golf tournament. Reservations can be made by calling Clayton or Doris Moulder at 231-627-7164. Make sure to mention the FIA golf tournament when making your reservations.

An added feature to this year's golf tournament will be a second flight or division to accommodate the "occasional" golfer – the golfer who just likes to go out and have a good time on the golf course but does not have the experience or skill to compete at the championship level. All counties are encouraged to enter a team in this year's tournament; please make sure to indicate on the entry form in which flight or division your team wishes to compete (championship or fun flight). Remember that the winning team in the championship flight is responsible for hosting next year's tournament.

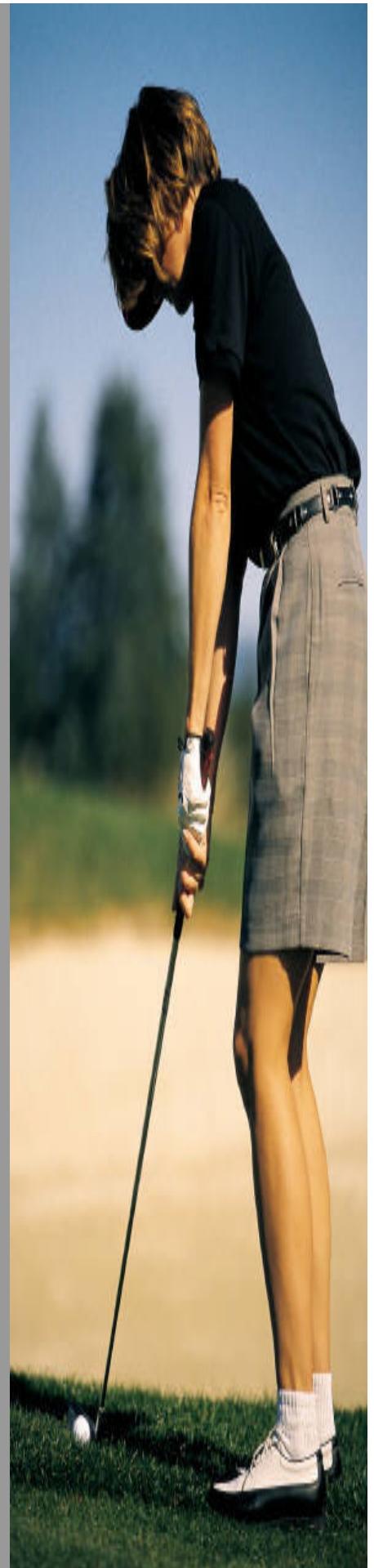
Please mail completed entry forms along with the \$160 to John Waisanen, 1607 McRae Road, Cheboygan, MI 49721. Entry fee checks should be made payable to Cheboygan Golf and Country Club and should be submitted as soon as possible.

All teams are encouraged to bring along a "little gift" as in previous year's – to be used as a door prize, etc. The prize gift should be indicative of the area of the state you are coming from.

[Click here](#) to get a copy of the application and to see the rules for this year's tournament. For further information please email michiganfiagolf@yahoo.com

To complement this year's golf tournament and provide an additional activity, casino packages will be available from the Kewadin Casino in St. Ignace for golf participants. The casino packages will be available on either Thursday or Friday afternoon and evening but only one package per golfer.

Cheboygan-Mackinac FIA is excited to host this year's tournament and have already placed an order for great weather with fall colors included. We look forward to seeing all of you in September.



Date: July 13
To: FIA Matters!
Subj: Julie Beebe

I have in my hands a letter on a thank you note. It says: "To the FIA; Thank you for your help all this time. I am very proud of it. To Julie Beebe, thank you for everything. Again, thank you so much." We have many customers living here that were born in other countries. It was nice of her to send a note to her worker even though she struggles with (English).

Cindy Nelson, Family Independence Manager

Manistee County FIA, Manistee

■ *Julie Beebe is a family independence specialist with Manistee County FIA.*

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

Date: July 13
To: FIA Matters!
Subj: Awards

Greater Lansing Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants recently recognized award winners for 2003 and 2004 and recognized four FIA staff. **Larry Matecki Fields** was awarded the 2003 Community Service Award recognizing his work with the Eaton Intermediate School District and Hayes Green Beach Hospital. **Russ Hecko** was awarded the 2004 Community Service Award recognizing his work at Ele's Place, as a Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteer and with the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program. **Christy Ryan** was awarded the 2004 Leadership Award recognizing her leadership achievement as the chapter president for the year. **Cindy Osga** received the 2003 National President's Award for her contributions to the National Leadership Handbook and support of the national president.

Cindy Osga

Greater Lansing Chapter Awards and Nominations Director

■ *Larry Matecki Fields and Russ Hecko work in FIA Accounting, Christy Ryan works for Accounting out to the State Disbursement Unit, and Cindy Osga works for FIA Project Financing.*

Date: June 18
To: Kathleen Langhals, Director
Chippewa County FIA, Sault Ste. Marie
Subj: Steve Munger and Lori Tomkinson

The Office of Children's Ombudsman recognize(s) Chippewa County Children's Protective Services worker Steve Munger and Foster Care worker Lori Tomkinson for their work on (a case). The family was the subject of a recent CPS investigation. (We) recently investigated a complaint related to Chippewa County's handling of CPS complaints concerning these children, and the subsequent case planning. We have closed our case affirming the actions of your county. There are varied and even opposing opinions regarding this case by the numerous community partners involved with the family. FIA's position regarding case planning is well supported and thoroughly documented. The workers' efforts were well coordinated and their commitment to the best interest of these children is very evident. It has been a pleasure to observe the work of Ms. Tomkinson and Mr. Munger and commend them for their work.

Lynne Martinez

Children's Ombudsman

■ *The Office of Children's Ombudsman is an independent government agency established by Public Act 204 of 1994 that gives the ombudsman authority to investigate complaints about children in Michigan's child welfare system. The original letter included case information that was removed to protect case confidentiality.*

Date: March 30
To: William Johnson, Director
FIA Adoption Division
Subj: Nannette Salyer

This note is to express my appreciation for the support and expeditious help I received from Nanette Salyer, adoption inquiry specialist. On March 23 I wrote requesting information on how to get a copy of my birth certificate. Nanette Salyer called me March 25 and explained to me what she could do to help me. On March 26 she sent me a very kind letter enclosing information about my adoption. I would be remiss if I did not write this note to let you know how much I appreciate this help, support and cooperation.

Michael G. Sayre

Charlotte

■ *Nannette Salyer works in FIA Adoption Division in Lansing.*

FIA Matters! is a product of Michigan's Family Independence Agency
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Larry VanDeSande, editor Submit stories by e-mail to: FIA-Newsletter@michigan.gov